

Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn

(The Hypocrites)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 11 verses and 2 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ
لَرَسُولُهُ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١﴾ اتَّخَذُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ
جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢﴾ ذَلِكَ
بِأَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا فَطُبِعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٣﴾ وَإِذَا
رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ وَإِنْ يَقُولُوا تَسْمَعُ لِقَوْلِهِمْ كَانَتْهُمْ
خُشْبٌ مُسْنَدَةٌ يَحْسَبُونَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ
فَاحْذَرْهُمْ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَتَى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٤﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا
يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لَوَّا رُءُوسَهُمْ وَرَأَيْتَهُمْ يَصُدُّونَ وَهُمْ
مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٥﴾ سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ
لَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٦﴾ هُمُ الَّذِينَ
يَقُولُونَ لَا تَنْفِقُوا عَلَى مَنْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَنْفَضُوا وَلِلَّهِ
خَزَائِنُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٧﴾

يَقُولُونَ لئن رَجَعْنَا إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ وَلِلَّهِ
الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَكِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨﴾

When the hypocrites come to you, they say, "We bear witness that you are indeed the messenger of Allah." And Allah knows that you are really His messenger. And Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are actually liars. [1] They have made their oaths a shield, and thus they have prevented (others) from the way of Allah. Surely evil is what they have been doing. [2] That is because they declared their faith (apparently), then disbelieved (secretly). Therefore a seal has been set on their hearts, and thus they do not understand. [3] And if you see them, their bodies would attract you, and if they speak, you would listen to their speech. (Yet, being devoid of substance,) it is as if they were propped up pieces of wood. They deem every shout (they hear) to be against them (out of cowardice). They are the enemy; so beware of them. May Allah destroy them. How perverted are they! [4] And when it is said to them, "Come on, Allah's Messenger will pray for your forgiveness", they twist their heads, and you see them turning away in arrogance. [5] It is equal in their case, whether you pray for their forgiveness or do not pray, Allah will not forgive them. Indeed Allah does not guide the sinning people. [6] They are the ones who say, "Do not spend on those who are with Allah's Messenger so that they disperse." And to Allah belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand. [7] They say, "If we return to Madīnah, the more honourable ones will drive out the meaner ones from there." And to Allah belongs the honour, and to His Messenger, and to the believers, but the hypocrites do not know. [8]

Commentary

Background of Revelation

The incident, in which this Sūrah was revealed, took place in the campaign against Banul-Muṣṭaliq which happened, according to Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, in Sha'bān 6 AH and, according to Qatādah and 'Urwah, in Sha'bān 5 AH. [Maḥzarī]. According to Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq and most historians, the details of the incident is as follows: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ received the news that the leader of

Banul-Muṣṭaliq, namely, Ḥārith Ibn Dirar, is preparing for a campaign against him. Ḥārith Ibn Dirar was the father of Sayyidah Juwairiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا who later on embraced Islam and became one of the Holy wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Ḥārith Ibn Dirār رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ himself later on embraced Islam.

Nevertheless, when the messenger of Allah ﷺ received the news about the campaign against him, he gathered a group of Muslims and went out to face them. Many hypocrites joined the Muslims to fight the *jihād* in the hope that they will receive a share in the spoils of war, because they, despite having disbelief in their hearts, were sure that Divine help will be on the Prophet's side, and he will attain victory.

When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ reached Banul-Muṣṭaliq's settlement, he faced Ḥārith Ibn Dirār's army near a well that was known as Muraisī'. Therefore, the campaign is also known as the battle of Muraisī'. The combatants arrayed themselves and shot arrows at each other. Many of the Banul-Muṣṭaliq's men were killed and others fled; and some men and women were captured as prisoners of war. Some of their belongings fell into Muslim hands as spoils of war. Allah granted victory to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the *jihād* came to an end.

Co-operation on the basis of Tribal, Racial, National or Regional Bias is the Slogan of Pre-Islamic Paganism

Whilst the Muslim army was still at the well of Muraisī', an unpleasant scene broke out between a *Muhājir* (emigrant) and an *Anṣārī* (helper). They quarrelled over the same water where the battle was fought. The Emigrant called their fellow-Emigrants for help, and the Helpers called the fellow-Helpers for help. Some individuals came forward to help their respective sides, and the dispute might have led to a fight between the Emigrants and the Helpers. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to know about this, he immediately went to the scene of dispute, and expressed his indignation, saying مَبَالُ دَعْوَى الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ "What is this slogan of paganism [that you call for defence on the basis of regional, racial and national bias]?" دَعُوْهَا فَإِنَّهَا مُنْتَبَةٌ "Give up the slogan. It stinks." He said that every Muslim should help another Muslim brother, whether oppressor or oppressed. Helping the oppressed is quite obvious, but helping the oppressor implies to stop him from oppression. In all matters it is necessary to find out who is the oppressed and help him and who is the oppressor and stop him from oppressing, even though he may be his own

brother or father. The racial, lineal, regional or national pride and prejudice is a filthy slogan, and it gives out nothing but bad odour.

The speech of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ brought the quarrel to an end, and the dispute was thus quelled. The two people involved in this dispute were Jahjah, the Emigrant, and Sinān Ibn Wabrah al-Juhani, the Helper. In this matter, the former was more on the wrong, and the latter was wounded. Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣamit رضي الله عنه explained to Sinān Ibn Wabrah al-Juhani رضي الله عنه, and he took understanding and pardoned Jahjah رضي الله عنه. The oppressor and the oppressed thus became brothers.

The hypocrites had joined the Muslims for greed of receiving a share from the spoils. Their leader was 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy. Like other hypocrites, he called himself a Muslim for mundane benefits, but concealed enmity in his heart against the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Muslims. When he came to know about the clash between the Muhājirs (Emigrants) and Anṣār (the Helpers), he found this an ideal opportunity to cause friction among the Muslims. So he addressed an assembly in which there were hypocrites and a Muslim Zaid Ibn Arqam رضي الله عنه where he strongly provoked the Helpers with his fiery speech against the Emigrants, saying: "You have brought all this on yourselves. You have let them settle in your land and share your wealth and property. They are fed on your breads until they became strong and now they rival you. If you do not realize the consequences of your helping them, they will make your life miserable. Therefore, in future you should abandon them and stop helping them with your property, and they would themselves disperse to other areas. By Allah, when we go back to Madīnah the most honourable of the inhabitants of Madīnah shall drive out the meanest of them from there." He termed his own group and the Anṣār as 'the honourable ones', and [God forbid!] the Holy Prophet ﷺ along with the *muhajirin* as 'the meanest ones'. When Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam رضي الله عنه heard his speech, he retorted instantly: "By Allah, you are mean, low and despicable. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is successful by God-given honour, and by the love of the Muslims.

Since 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy wanted to keep his hypocrisy under a veil, he concealed his intention under the cover of the vague expression of 'the most honoured and the meanest'. When Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam رضي الله عنه made a sharp retort, he realized that his disbelief would be uncovered, he

apologized to Sayyidna Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ that he was merely joking and did not mean to do anything against the Messenger of Allah ؐ.

Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ left the assembly and went to the Messenger of Allah ؐ and reported to him the whole story about 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy. This news was very disturbing and trying for the Holy Prophet ؐ. The colour of his blessed countenance changed. Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ was a young Companion at the time. The Holy Prophet ؐ asked him: "Boy! Are you not perhaps lying?" Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ swore by Allah and said: "I heard these words with my own ears." The Holy Prophet ؐ said to him: "Are you sure you are not saying this on the basis of some suspicion?". Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ made the same reply. After that, the news of Ibn Ubayy's fiery speech spread throughout the Muslim army. No one spoke anything but about this speech. On the other hand, the Helpers reproached Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ. They said that he has accused the venerable leader of the nation (that is, Ibn Ubayy) and severed kinship ties with him. Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ swore by Allah and said that in the entire tribe of Khazraj, Ibn Ubayy was the dearest person to him, but when he uttered the unpleasant words against the Messenger of Allah ؐ, he could not hold himself. "Even if that were my father," he went on, "I would have certainly reported his speech to the Messenger of Allah ؐ."

When Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ heard the story, he said: "O Allah's Messenger! Permit me to behead this hypocrite." According to another narration, Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ said: "Permit 'Abbād Ibn Bishr to cut off his head and present it to you." The Messenger of Allah ؐ said that if he were to permit them to do that, the news will spread among people that Muḥammad ؐ kills his own Comrades. As a result, he did not allow Ibn Ubayy to be killed. When this news about Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ reached 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy's son who also bore the same name as his father's, 'Abdullah, but he was a sincere Muslim, he immediately went up to the Messenger of Allah ؐ and said: "If you wish my father to be killed because of his speech, then allow me to kill him and bring his head to you before you arise from your assembly. The entire tribe of Khazraj is a witness to the fact that no one is more serving and obedient to my parents than myself. But I will not tolerate any of their mischief against Allah and His Messenger ؐ. If you allow anyone else to kill my father and he

kills him, then, I am afraid, when I see my father's killer walking freely, my tribal jealousy may overcome me and I may be tempted to kill him, and that might be the cause of my punishment." The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "I do not have the intention of killing him, nor have I instructed anyone else to kill him."

After this incident, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ announced, at an unusual time against his normal habit, that he would immediately set out on his journey back to Madīnah. So he mounted his she-camel Quṣwā' and started his journey at an unusual time. When the general body of the blessed Companions had set out on the journey, the Holy Prophet ﷺ called 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy and asked him: "Did you say this?" He took oath and denied everything that was imputed to him, and claimed that the boy, Zaid Ibn Arqam, was a liar. 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy was the respectable chief of his people. All the people felt that may be Zaid Ibn Arqam ﷺ was under some misconception, and Ibn Ubayy did not say it as was conveyed.

In any case, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ accepted Ibn Ubayy's oath and explanation. The reproach of the people against Zaid Ibn Arqam ﷺ was further aggravated. This embarrassed him and he hid himself from the people. Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ travelled with the entire Muslim army the whole day and night and the next morning, until the bright sun was out. Then he, together with the army, halted in a place. They were all exhausted on account of the long and strenuous journey. As soon as they touched the ground, they fell into deep sleep.

The narrator reports that the purpose of this unusually immediate and long journey was to close the chapter of the story of Ibn Ubayy, which had by and by spread among the entire Muslim community, and they talked about it all the time.

After that, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ started the journey, in the course of which Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣāmit ﷺ suggested to Ibn Ubayy to approach the Holy Prophet ﷺ and admit his guilt before him who would pray Allah for his pardon and he would attain salvation. When he heard this suggestion, he turned his head away. No Qur'ānic verses pertaining to Ibn Ubayy were revealed until then, but when he turned himself away in haughty arrogance, Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣāmit ﷺ

said: "Certainly, the Qur'ān will reveal verses pertaining to your turning down the advice."

While the Holy Prophet ﷺ was on his journey, Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ came near him again and again, and he was firm that since this hypocrite has called him a liar and embarrassed him in front of the entire nation. Allah would surely reveal verses to clear him and give the lie to the hypocrite. Suddenly Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ noticed that the Holy Prophet ﷺ entered into the state that he experienced when he received revelation: He started breathing heavily, his forehead dripped with perspiration and his mount, the she-camel, began to feel the weight of the revelation. Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ sensed that some revelation was coming down regarding that matter. When that state of revelation was over, and, because his own mount was closer to the mount of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he held the ear of Zaid ؓ and said يَا غُلَامُ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ حَدِيثُكَ وَنَزَلَتْ سُورَةُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي ابْنِ أَبِي مِنْ أُولَئِكَ إِلَى آخِرِهَا "O Boy, Allah has confirmed the veracity of your statement, and the entire Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn - from the beginning to the end - has been revealed in connection with Ibn Ubayy's incident."

This shows that Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn was revealed in the course of the journey. According to Baghawī's narration, however, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had reached Madīnah and Sayyidnā Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ was hiding himself in the house for fear of reprisal, when this Surah was revealed. And Allah knows best!

According to another narration, when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ approached Madīnah at the valley of 'Aqiq, 'Abdullah, the son of the hypocrite 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy, who was a faithful believer, went forward and searched through the throng of mounts and, finding his father's mount, made it sit. He placed his foot on its knees and said to his father: "By Allah! You cannot enter Madīnah unless the Messenger of Allah permits you, and unless you clarify who are the most honourable inhabitants of Madīnah that will expel the meanest ones. Tell me who is the most honourable one, the Messenger of Allah or you?" Passers-by were reproaching 'Abdullah as to how unkindly he was treating his father. By then the mount of Allah's Messenger ﷺ came near. He inquired what was happening. People said that 'Abdullah has barred his father's entry into Madīnah unless Allah's Messenger permits him. The

Holy Prophet ﷺ saw that the hypocritical Ibn Ubayy declared to his son that he himself was the meanest of the citizens of Madīnah, even meaner than children and women, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ the most honourable of them. At this, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to the son: "Leave his way; let him enter." The son then let him enter.

Only this much is the story of the revelation of Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn. At the beginning of the story, a concise reference was made to the campaign of Banul-Muṣṭaliq where it was shown that the real person responsible for the campaign was Ḥārith Ibn Ḍarār who at that time was not a Muslim but embraced Islam later. He was the father of Sayyidah Juwairiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا who too was not a Muslim but embraced Islam later, and became one of the noble wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Musnad of Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd and others record that when Banul-Muṣṭaliq were defeated, spoils of war, together with prisoners of war, fell into Muslim hands. According to Islamic Law, all prisoners and spoils of war were distributed among the Mujāhidīn. Among the prisoners of war was Juwairiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا the daughter of Ḥārith Ibn Ḍarār. She fell to the lot of Sayyidnā Thābit Ibn Qais Ibn Shammās. He entered into the contract of *kitābah* to set her free in lieu of a specified sum of money.¹

According to Sayyidah Juwairiyah's رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا contract of *kitābah*, the sum specified was very large and she could not pay off the large sum of money to purchase her freedom. She came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said: "I have embraced Islam and I bear witness that there is only One Allah and He has no partners, and that you are Allah's Messenger." Then she went on to narrate her story: "I fell to the lot of Thābit Ibn Qais Ibn Shammās, but we entered into the contract of *kitābah* and the sum specified in the contract is so large that I cannot manage. Please do help me." The Holy Prophet ﷺ acceded to her request. In addition, he expressed his intention to emancipate her and marry her. For Sayyidah Juwairiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا, this was a great boon. How could she refuse to accept this offer? She accepted the offer whole-heartedly, and thus became one of the noble wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah Juwairiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا says that three days before the Holy Prophet ﷺ came for the campaign of Banul-Muṣṭaliq, 'I saw in my dream that the moon arose in Yathrib and it

(1) For fuller explanation of the contract of *kitābah*, see volume 6, pp.426-427 of this book under the commentary of Sūrah 24:33. (Muḥammad Taqi Usmani)

came and fell in my lap. I did not narrate this dream to anyone at that time. Now I have seen its interpretation with my own eyes.'

She was the daughter of the leader of her nation. When she became one of the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, it exerted a great influence on the entire tribe. One advantage that accrued to all women captured with her was that all of them were emancipated. They were relatives of the Mother of the Faithful. The Muslims set free all slave-girls related to her when they came to know of her joining the rank of the Mother of the Faithful. They felt that it is disrespectful to keep any of her relatives as a slave-girl. About one hundred of them were emancipated with her. Her father saw a miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and embraced Islam.

The Above Story Imparts Guiding Principles on Important Issues

The circumstances, under which Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn was revealed, indeed help us understand the basic interpretation of the Sūrah. Additionally, they bring out some important guiding principles related to moral or ethical, political and social issues. That is why the full story has been fully recounted here. The guiding principles derived from this story are given below:

The Foundation Stone of Islamic Polity: Establishment of Islamic Brotherhood which Aims at Ending Colour, Racial and Linguistic Discriminations, and Indigenous-Alien Prejudices

The episode of the dispute that broke out between an Emigrant and a Helper, and each side calling their fellow-Emigrants and their fellow-Helpers respectively for help was the icon of paganism which the Holy Prophet ﷺ destroyed. He established the principle that all believers are brothers, regardless of their race, colour, language, or nationality. The bond of brotherhood the Holy Prophet ﷺ established between the Refugees and the Helpers had made them like real brothers. It is, however, the ancient Satanic network to get people involved in mutual dispute and quarrel on the basis of nationality, race, language, colour and regionalism. Satan calls for mutual co-operation and help on this basis alone. This necessarily results in blocking out the Islamic concept of mutual co-operation which is based on Truth, justice, fair play and equity *vis-à-vis* the un-Islamic co-operation based on race and nationalism taken place. In this way, the Satan causes friction among Muslims. In this

instance also a similar situation would have developed if the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not arrive on the scene in time and quell the dispute and said to them that it was the stinking slogan of paganism and that they should give it up. He re-established them on the Qur'ānic principle of mutual co-operation تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ (And help each other in righteousness and piety, and do not help each other in sin and aggression....5:2) In other words, the standard for Muslims to help others or to receive help from others is good will, justice, fair play and equity. They should co-operate mutually on this basis, even though the others may belong to another race, ethnic group, or to another region. They should not unite in one conjoint to co-operate in sin and injustice, even though he may be father or brother. This is the just and rational foundation which Islam has laid, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ himself took care of this every step of the way and commanded everyone to follow the principle. In his Farewell Address, he said that all customs of paganism are trampled under his feet. The idols of discrimination of Arab-non-Arab, white-black and indigenous- aliens have been broken. Islamic principle of mutual help and co-operation is Truth and justice. All should apply it.

Another lesson that stems from this story is that the enemies of Islam since time immemorial use nationalism and regionalism to cause friction, and break up the Muslim Community. Whenever the opportunity arises, they split them up.

Alas, the Muslims have long forgotten this lesson, and the enemies have once more set up the same Satanic network to break up Islamic unity. The Muslims all over the world have put the religion and the religious principles into oblivion. As a result, they have become victims of civil wars. Their united front to fight disbelief has been smashed. The Muslim world is divided not only into Arabs and non-Arabs, but further divided into Egyptian, Syrian, Hījāzī and Yemeni. In the Indo-Pak sub-continent, the Punjabis, Bengalis, Sindhis, Hindis, Pathans and Balochis are victims of mutual differences. To Allah we direct our complaint! The enemies of Islam are toying with our differences. As a result, they are overcoming us in all fields, and we are defeated everywhere. We have developed a slavish mentality and are forced to take refuge in them. Even today we can see with our open eyes Divine

help and assistance coming to us, provided we adopt the Qur'ānic principles and the guidance of Allah's Messenger ﷺ; provided we adhere to a strong Islamic brotherhood instead of showing a slavish devotion to the lifestyle of others; and provided we break down the idols of colour, race, language and region.

The Noble Companions' Unparalleled Adherence to Islamic Principles and their Lofty Station

This incident further shows that though the Satan made some people raise the slogan of paganism temporarily, the ʾĪmān was so engrossed in their hearts that the slightest admonition was sufficient to jolt them into repenting. They had such a high degree of love and reverence for Allah and His Messenger ﷺ that no relationship and sense of nationality could act as a barrier against it. An eloquent testimony of that is contained in the statement of Zaid Ibn Arqam ؓ. He himself was a member of the tribe of Khazraj and Ibn Ubayy was the leader of that tribe, and the former loved and venerated the latter most dearly, but he could not tolerate the provocative words uttered against the Refugee Muslims and Allah's Messenger ﷺ by his leader, and he made a blunt reply then and there. Then he went up to Allah's Messenger ﷺ and complained to him about the hypocrite. The tribal-worshippers of the present age would never have dared to take the complaint of their leaders to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The attitude of Ibn Ubayy's son 'Abdullah in this incident makes it crystal clear that his real love and veneration was dedicated to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. When he heard him utter words against them, he went to Allah's Messenger ﷺ and sought his consent to cut off his father's head. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ did not permit him, he made his father's mount sit, when he approached Madīnah, blocked his way and forced him to admit that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is 'the most honourable' and that he himself is 'the meanest one'. He did not open the way for his father before the Holy Prophet's ﷺ permission.

Besides, the idols of nation-worship and land-worship were broken to pieces in the battles of Badr, Uhūd and Aḥzāb, which proved that all Muslims are brothers, no matter which nationality, country, colour or language group they belong to. Anyone who does not believe in Allah and His Messenger ﷺ is an enemy, even though he may be his own real

brother or father.

هزار خویش که بیگانه از خدا باشد..... فدائی يك تن بیگانه كاشنا باشد

Thousands of relatives who are alien to Allah

May be sacrificed to an alien who is faithful to Allah.

Taking Care of General Welfare of Muslims: Protecting them from Misunderstanding

Another point illustrated by this incident is that an act which is permissible in itself should be avoided if it may create a misunderstanding in the mind of a Muslim, or may provide an opportunity for the enemies to spread misunderstanding among them. Thus, despite the fact that Ibn Ubayy's hypocrisy was exposed openly, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not permit Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ to behead him when he sought his permission, because the enemies could create misunderstanding in the public minds that Muḥammad ﷺ killed his own Comrades. But it should be noted that, as other traditions prove, such acts may be abandoned only when they are not from the basic objectives of Shari'ah, though they may be laudable. As for the basic objectives of Shari'ah, they cannot be abandoned for such an apprehension. Instead, attempts must be made to remove the danger and do the work dictated by the objectives of Shari'ah.

Let us now study some specific sentences of the Sūrah:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (And when it is said to them, "Come on, and Allah's Messenger will pray for your forgiveness"...63:5) When this Sūrah exposed the false oaths of 'Abdullah Ibn Ubayy, the leader of the hypocrites, people went up to him to advise him to approach the Holy Prophet ﷺ and admit his guilt. They said that he has still time to request the Holy Messenger ﷺ to pray to Allah to forgive him. To this, he responded by turning his head around and saying arrogantly: "I believed when you asked me to believe; I paid *Zakāh* when you asked to; and now the only thing left is for you to ask me to prostrate to Muḥammad ﷺ." The above verses were revealed on this occasion, which make plain that he has no faith, and therefore asking forgiveness for him cannot benefit him in any way.

Ibn Ubayy, after this incident, returned to Madīnah, lived for a few days, and died soon thereafter. [Mazḥarī].

هُمُ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ لَا تُنْفِقُوا عَلَى مَنْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَنْفَضُوا (They are the ones who say, "Do not spend on those who are with Allah's Messenger, so that they disperse...63:7) This verse points out to the foolish statement that Ibn Ubayy had made at the time of the dispute between Jahjah, the Emigrant, and Sinan, the Helper. Allah Ta'ala has responded to it that these foolish people have presumed that the Emigrants need their donations and they are their sustainers, while all treasures of heavens and the earth belong to Allah. If He wills, He can provide to them everything without any contribution from their side. Since the statement made by Ibn Ubayy was an evidence of his foolishness, the Holy Qur'an states: لَا يَفْقَهُونَ "...but the hypocrites do not understand [7]."

يَقُولُونَ لَئِنْ رَجَعْنَا إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ (They say, "If we return to Madinah, the more honourable ones will drive out the meaner ones from there."...63:8) This too is the statement of Ibn Ubayy, the hypocrite. Although the words used by him were ambiguous, the intention was clear. He termed himself and the natives of Madinah as 'honourable' and the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Emigrant Companions as (God forbid!) the 'meanest'. He thus provoked the Helpers of Madinah against the Emigrants that the former should drive out the latter from their city. In answer to this, Allah recoiled his boastful statement against himself by pointing out that if those who are really 'honourable' drive out those who are really the 'meanest', it will go against themselves, because all honour belongs to Him, His Messenger and the believers. The hypocrites, however, are unaware of this because of their ignorance. The concluding phrase of this verse is لَا يَعْلَمُونَ '...but the hypocrites do not know. [8]' This may be contrasted with the concluding phrase of verse لَا يَفْقَهُونَ 'but they do not understand'. The reason for the distinction between 'do not understand' and 'do not know' is as follows: If a person thinks that he is the provider of others, this is completely irrational. This is the sign of his foolishness. Honour and dishonour, on the other hand, can fall to anyone's lot. Therefore, if he errs in his judgement, this is ignorance of facts or true state of affairs. Thus we have here لَا يَعْلَمُونَ '...but the hypocrites do not know. [8]'

Verses 9 - 11

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَاُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُونَ ﴿٩﴾ وَاَنْفِقُوا مِنْ مَّا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاتِيَ اَحَدُكُمْ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّ لَوْلَا اٰخِرَتِيْٓ اِلَىٰ اَجَلٍ قَرِيْبٍ ۚ فَاَصَدَّقَ ۚ وَاَكُنْ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَلَنْ يُؤَخَّرَ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهَا ۗ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾

O those who believe, your riches and your children must not divert you from the remembrance of Allah. And those who do that are the losers. [9] And spend out of what We have given to you before death overtakes one of you and he says, "My Lord, would you not respite me to a near term, and I will pay *ṣadaqah* (alms) and will become one of the righteous." [10] And Allah will never respite anyone, once his appointed time will come. And Allah is All-Aware of what you do. [11]

Commentary

Linkage between Sections [1] and [2]

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَلْهٰكُمْ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا اَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ

O those who believe, your riches and your children must not divert you from the remembrance of Allah. (63:9)

The preceding section dealt with the hypocrites, their false oaths and their conspiracies. In sum, their nefarious activities were based on their excessive love for the worldly gains. They outwardly claimed to be Muslims, so that they might not suffer loss at the hands of the sincere Muslims, and might share the spoils of war with them. One of the consequences of this mentality was their design to stop spending on the Emigrant Companions. Now, this second section addresses the sincere and faithful believers, and warns them against being intoxicated with the love of this world, as the hypocrites foolishly did. There are two major objects in this world that divert a person from the remembrance of Allah: [1] wealth; and [2] children. Therefore, these two things have been named in particular. Otherwise, it refers to all the means of enjoyments in the world. The import of the verse is that love of wealth and children to some extent is not bad. Being engaged with them to a certain degree is not only permissible but also obligatory. But there is a dividing line between permissible and impermissible love that must always be borne in mind.

The criterion is that this love must not deviate one from Allah's remembrance. The word *dhikr* (remembrance) in this context has been variously interpreted by different commentators. Some say it refers to the five daily prayers, while others say it refers to Zakāh or Ḥajj. Some refer it to the Qur'an. Hasan Baṣrī expresses the view that the word *dhikr* here refers to all forms of obedience and worship. This is the most comprehensive interpretation. [Qurtubī]

In short, we are permitted to be involved in the material wealth up to the degree that it does not divert us from Allah's obedience. If one becomes engrossed in the material wealth or become absorbed in the forbidden or abominable things, which divert him from our duties and obligations towards Allah, the sentence "أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ" "...they are the losers" will apply, because he has sold the great and eternal reward of the Hereafter for the petty and perishable enjoyment of this world. What loss could be greater than this!

وَأَنْفِقُوا مِنْ مَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ (And spend out of what We have given to you before death comes to one of you...63:10) 'Coming of death' in this verse refers to 'witnessing the signs of death'. The verse exhorts the believers to make the best of their opportunities to spend in the way of Allah, in the state of good health and strength, before the signs of death appear, and thus they should have their degrees of rank elevated in the Hereafter. Once death overtakes them, the opportunity to spend will be lost, and the wealth will be of no use. Earlier on it was learned that the word *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) refers to all forms of obedience and following the dictates of Shari'ah, which include spending wealth as due. Despite that, spending wealth on this occasion has been mentioned separately. There may be two reasons for it: Firstly, one of the major objects that divert man from acting upon the sacred laws of Shari'ah is wealth. Therefore, spending wealth, in the form of Zakāh, 'Ushr, Ḥajj and so on, is specifically mentioned. Secondly, when a person sees the signs of death, it is not in his power to perform his missed prayers, or his missed Ḥajj, Ramaḍān fasts. However, the wealth is in front of him, and he is sure that soon it will slip out of his hand. So he may spend the wealth to compensate his shortfalls in worship and so attain salvation from such shortcomings. Furthermore, charity [*ṣadaqah*] is efficacious in averting calamities and punishment.

Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī and Muslim record on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that a person asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "Which *sadaqah* attracts most reward?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: "To spend in Allah's way when a person is in a state of good health, and yet he fears, in view of future needs, that if he spends the wealth he may become poor." Then he continued: "Do not delay spending in Allah's way until such time when your death reaches your throat, and at that moment you instruct (your heirs), 'Give this much to so-and-so and give this much for such and such work.'"

فَيَقُولُ رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ (...and he says, "My Lord, would you not respite me to a near term, and I will pay *sadaqah* (alms) and will become one of the righteous....63:10) Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ says, in the interpretation of this verse, that if *Zakāh* was due on a person and he failed to pay it, and *Hajj* was obligatory and he failed to perform it, he will express this desire when death approaches him. He will want a little more time so that he can give *sadaqah* and أَكُن مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ 'become one of the righteous' [10] In other words, he will also desire that he is given a little more time so that he may act righteously by fulfilling his obligations that he has missed out and repent and ask pardon for the forbidden and abominable acts he might have indulged in. But Allah makes it clear in the next verse that once his time has come, He will not give any more time to anyone. This desire at that stage is futile.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Munāfiqūn
Ends here